

# THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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On January 27, 1973, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet-Nam was signed in Paris. We achieved a settlement which permitted the disengagement of American forces, which left the resolution of the political future of Viet-Nam to be negotiated among the Vietnamese parties, and which returned American prisoners to their homes. We made clear our intention to end our remaining involvement in Viet-Nam as quickly as circumstances would permit.

The North Vietnamese have now launched a sharply intensified military campaign. For the first time since 1972, a provincial capital (Song Be in Phuoc Long Province) has been overrun. The level of casualties and destruction has reached its highest point since the agreement was signed. The latest attacks appear to reflect a renewed decision by Hanoi to conquer South Viet-Nam by force.

These developments make it particularly important, as we approach the second anniversary of the Paris agreement, that we assess the Viet-Nam situation as it has evolved in the last 2 years and its implications for the future.

### American Objectives

There is no longer any real argument about whether we will end our long and costly involvement in Viet-Nam; the only questions are when and how we end it.

Our goal is to complete the process of disengagement as rapidly as possible, in a manner which will:

- Avoid a political, economic, or military collapse in South Viet-Nam which would lead to new instability and upheaval in the area and pose new challenges to con-

flicting great power interests;

- Help promote a reasonable degree of political stability and orderly development in Southeast Asia and encourage the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the area and elsewhere in the world;
- Respect the sacrifices made by the American people in Viet-Nam; and
- Carry out our responsibility, as a signatory, to uphold the Paris agreement.

By signing the agreement (and by our policy of Vietnamization of the war) we, in effect, told the South Vietnamese we would not defend them with our military forces but would provide them—as permitted in the agreement—with the means to defend themselves. They have performed very effectively in accepting this challenge. We should keep our end of the bargain.

### Compliance with the Paris Agreement

The North Vietnamese signed the Paris agreement while they were conducting a last-minute offensive designed to seize as much South Vietnamese territory as possible before the ceasefire could take place. After the agreement was concluded and that offensive turned back, hostilities did decline for a time. It was our hope that the agreement would then provide a framework within which the Vietnamese could make their own political choices and resolve their own problems in an atmosphere of peace. Unfortunately this hope—a hope which was shared by the Republic of Viet-Nam and the South Vietnamese people—has been frustrated by the actions of North Viet-Nam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government. In clear violation of the agreement, they have:

- Infiltrated over 170,000 North Vietnamese

troops into South Viet-Nam and built up their main-force army in the South from about 220,000 at the time of the agreement to 300,000 now (of which 225,000 are North Vietnamese);

- Tripled the strength of their armor in the South by sending in over 400 new vehicles and increased the number of their artillery and anti-aircraft weapons as well;
- Improved their military logistics system running through Laos, Cambodia (Khmer Republic), and the Demilitarized Zone as well as within South Viet-Nam, and expanded their armament stockpiles;
- Refused to deploy the teams which under the agreement were to oversee the cease-fire;
- Refused to pay their prescribed share of the expenses of the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS);
- Failed to honor their commitment to cooperate in resolving the status of American and other personnel missing in action even breaking off all discussions on this matter by refusing for the past 7 months to meet with U.S. and Republic of Viet-Nam representatives in the Four-Party Joint Military Team;
- Broken off all negotiations with the Republic of Viet-Nam, including the political negotiations in Paris and the Two Party Joint Military Commission talks in Saigon, and answered the Republic of Viet-Nam's repeated calls for unconditional resumption of the negotiations with unreasonable demands for the overthrow of the Government as a precondition for any renewed talks; and
- Steadily increased their military pressure, overrunning several areas, including 11 district towns, which were clearly and unequivocally held by the Republic of Viet-Nam at the time of the cease-fire. Their latest and most serious escalation of the fighting began in early December 1974 with offensives in the southern half of South Viet-Nam and included the conquest of Phuoc Long Province and its capital, Song Be.

The record of American and South Vietnamese compliance presents a sharp contrast.

All American military forces and advisers were withdrawn 60 days after the signing of the agreement. There is no factual basis for Hanoi's

charges that there are thousands of American military advisers in Viet-Nam disguised as civilians.

U.S. military aid to the Republic of Viet-Nam has not even approached the one-for-one, piece-for-piece replacement level authorized by the agreement, while Russian and Chinese military aid to North Viet-Nam has remained at roughly the same level for the past 5 years (except for very large deliveries in 1972, the major invasion year) and has permitted a major buildup of North Vietnamese inventories in the South since the agreement.

Since the agreement does not impose a unilateral ceasefire on the South Vietnamese Government, the Republic of Viet-Nam has taken military measures to defend its people and its territory. However:

- South Vietnamese forces are on the military defensive. They are not fighting in North Viet-Nam or trying to overthrow its Government or political system.
- The Government has not increased the size of its armed forces.
- It has cooperated fully with the International Commission of Control and Supervision and paid its share of the commission's expenses.
- It has called for unconditional resumption of the negotiations with the Democratic Republic of (North) Viet-Nam and with the Provisional Revolutionary Government.
- It has proposed plans for a political settlement including internationally supervised elections on a specified date.

#### Situation in South Viet-Nam

The Paris agreement was designed to provide the South Vietnamese people with an opportunity to make their own choices and resolve their own problems in a peaceful way. It was not—and is not—U.S. policy to impose a government or social system on South Viet-Nam contrary to the desires of the majority of its people. In the view of the U.S. Government, the imposition of political solutions by military force not only violates our principles of justice but does not lead to real peace.

There is ample evidence that the South Vietnamese Government would overwhelmingly defeat the Communist side in a fair and free election or in any other meaningful test of popular opinion in South Viet-Nam. Even the

Communists realize this, which is why they have so persistently rebuffed all efforts to implement the provisions of the Paris agreement calling for internationally supervised elections.

There is the evidence of the refugees. Almost without exception they have fled to government-controlled areas, even when it would have been easier and safer to stay where they were and accept Communist rule or to move to Communist-controlled areas. This continues to be the case today, whenever the fighting generates new refugees. Furthermore, it would be relatively easy for anyone who so desired to move into a Communist-held area (and the Communists have encouraged this) but very few people have done so.

There are over 2 million people actively and directly participating in the Government's war effort. Clearly, if the Government lacked popular support, or if they preferred the Communists, these people would use their guns against the Government rather than for it, or would at least desert rather than run the daily risk of death or assassination of their families at the hands of Communist terrorists.

#### Future Prospects

Some critics of American Viet-Nam policy maintain that the best way to achieve peace is to reduce or end our aid to South Viet-Nam, thereby forcing the South Vietnamese Government to negotiate a political settlement. This proposal is based on the erroneous assumption that it is the South Vietnamese Government

which is blocking negotiations toward a settlement.

In fact, it is the North Vietnamese who are responsible for the breakdown of negotiations and the continuation of the war. The only kind of peace which North Viet-Nam is seeking is a peace imposed by force of arms.

This is not the kind of peace envisaged in the Paris agreement.

It is not the kind of peace for which we and the South Vietnamese people have struggled so long.

It is not the kind of peace which is consistent with the principles for which this country stands.

South Viet-Nam has excellent long-range potential. Its armed forces have demonstrated their ability to defend the country against North Vietnamese military pressure and can continue doing so with adequate logistical support. Its natural resources, including a skilled population, rich agricultural land and fishing grounds, and particularly the recent discovery of oil provide a solid base for rapid economic development similar to other countries of the area.

We believe that South Viet-Nam has the potential to become economically viable and militarily capable of defending itself. We believe it should be free to choose its own political system and leaders as envisaged in the Paris agreement, and able to work out its own long-range accommodation with the North. We believe our objectives in South Viet-Nam would then be accomplished.

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